

1939 Being among the chosen

Girl, aged 4, Liverpool

When we arrived in Portmadoc we were taken to the Town Hall - where people chose which children they were after.

My sister Pat was attractive, whereas I was plain. An old man noticed Pat and asked a teacher if he could take her. She told him that she had a sister, and if he wanted her he must take me too.

He went home to ask his wife if she could have two children. She agreed, so he returned to collect us.

When he arrived I started to cry and refused to go. The old man went to the nearest florist and bought an enormous bunch of flowers for me. Then I went.

We finally arrived at the old man's house seated in a chauffeur-driven car. At the house there was a big library. My sister Pat used to spend hours upon hours in the library.

Then I caught chicken-pox and we had to go to another house.

At the second house was a very strict woman.

Now I really liked ginger and one day this woman made some ginger cakes.

When the woman went to have her afternoon sleep, I sneaked into the kitchen and picked round one of the cakes. When I looked at the cakes, I saw the one I'd picked stood out like a sore thumb. So I picked round all the cakes to make them look the same.

When the woman woke up and saw the cakes she sat all the children on the floor and looked for the child with the guilty-looking face. When she caught me she took me off and locked me in a dark attic.

My sister Pat had written to our mum a few days before. She said in our letter that we both wanted to go home.

My mum came to collect us while I was still in the attic.

When the woman explained why I was in the attic, my mum went mad. She took us straight away.